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SUBJECT: Ambassador Discusses Pharmaceuticals, Afghanistan and Other  
Issues with Health Minister

REF: STATE 3361

¶1. (U) In his introductory call with Norwegian Minister of Health and Care Services Anne-Greth Strom-Erichson on February 10, the Ambassador 2010 discussed intellectual property problems facing research-based pharmaceuticals companies, Afghanistan, the H1N1 pandemic, and other issues.

¶2. (SBU) Pharmaceuticals: The Ambassador noted gaps in Norwegian intellectual property protection for certain pharmaceuticals patents filed before 1992. He informed the Minister that Norway had been placed on the Watch List in the U.S. Trade Representative's Special 301 Report in both 2008 and 2009 over this issue, and urged the GON to take steps to address the problem. The Minister spoke frankly that she had not been aware of this issue and assured the Ambassador that she would look into it.

¶3. (SBU) Afghanistan: The Ambassador thanked the Minister, who had been Defense Minister until 2009, for Norway's support in Afghanistan, while noting that the United States could use even more help. Strom-Erichsen, who said she had visited Afghanistan ten times as Defense Minister, agreed that Norway could do more and said she would have liked for Norway to do more.

¶4. (U) Other Health Issues: Strom-Erichsen said she was interested in the U.S. health care system, and noted that a parliamentary delegation would visit Kaiser Permanente's offices in San Francisco next week. She said one of the key issues in the Norway's health sector is the question of how much service provision should be public and how much private, and offered her view that both were needed. The Minister recalled that she had to deal with the H1N1 pandemic and the vaccination issue during her initial days in office, but opined that the GON had handled the issue well. The Ambassador highlighted his strong interest in promoting both business and educational exchange with the United States, and offered that there were promising possibilities for collaboration with Norway's health care sector and with institutions of higher education.

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